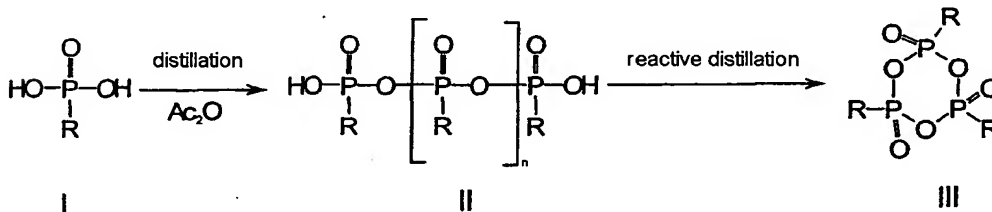


This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

- 1.(Currently Amended) A process for preparing cyclic phosphonic anhydride ~~anhydrides~~ of the formula (III) by
  - a) reaction of a phosphonic acid derivative ~~derivatives~~ of the formula (I) with acetic anhydride at a temperature in the range from 30 to 150°C and simultaneous distillative removal of a mixture of acetic acid and acetic anhydride,
  - b) subsequent reactive distillation of the oligomeric phosphonic anhydride ~~anhydrides~~ of the formula (II) obtained in step a) and conversion to the corresponding cyclic trimeric phosphonic anhydride ~~anhydrides~~ of the formula (III)



where

n is an integer from 0 to 300 and

R are allyl, aryl or open-chain cyclic or branched  $\text{C}_1$  to  $\text{C}_8$ -alkyl radicals, aryloxy, allyloxy or alkoxy having open-chain cyclic or branched  $\text{C}_1$  to  $\text{C}_8$ -alkyl radicals.

2.(Currently Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the cyclic trimeric phosphonic anhydride ~~anhydrides~~ formed in step b) ~~[[are]]~~ is immediately dissolved in an organic solvent which is inert toward them.

3.(Currently Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1 ~~and/or~~ 2, wherein the ratio of acetic anhydride to phosphonic acid of the formula (I) is in the range of 20:1 and 1:1.

4.(Currently Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein ~~at least one of claims 1 to 3~~ the reactive distillation in step b) is effected at a temperature in the range from 100 to 450°C (the internal reactor temperature) and a top temperature of from 100 to 380°C.

5.Currently Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1 ~~at least one of claims 1 to 4~~, wherein the pressure in

a) the distillation of acetic acid and unconverted acetic anhydride is between 1 mbar and 1000 mbar, and

b) in the reactive distillation of the oligomeric phosphonic anhydride ~~anhydrides~~ of the formula (II) to give the cyclic phosphonic anhydride ~~anhydrides~~ of the formula (III) is within a pressure range between 0.001 mbar and 500 mbar.

6. The process of claim 1, wherein said process ~~as claimed in at least one of claims 1 to 5, which~~ is carried out continuously.

7.(Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~as claimed in at least one of claims 1 to 6~~, wherein the resulting cyclic trimeric phosphonic ~~anhydrides~~ anhydride of the formula (III), after the reactive distillation, ~~[[are]]~~ is dissolved in an organic solvent in a mixing ratio of solvent to phosphonic anhydride in the range of 10:1 and 1:10.

8.(Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 ~~as claimed in at least one of claims 1 to 7~~, wherein the organic solvent is selected from the group consisting of ligroin, sulfolane, DMSO, HMPT, NMP, pentane, hexane, heptane, octane, cyclopentane, cyclohexane, cycloheptane, cyclooctane, dichloromethane, chloroform, carbon tetrachloride, 1,2-dichloroethane, 1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane, methyl acetate, ethyl acetate, propyl acetate, butyl acetate, dimethylformamide, diethylformamide, dimethylacetamide, diethylacetamide, diethyl ether, diisopropyl ether, tert-butyl methyl ether, THF, dioxane, acetonitrile, sulfolane, DMSO, HMPT, NMP, ~~[[or a mixture]]~~ and mixtures thereof.

9.(Currently Amended) A method for forming amine bonds in a reaction selected from the group consisting of condensation, acylation, preparation of heterocyclics, and combinations thereof, said method comprising carrying out said reaction in the presence of the ~~The use of~~ cyclic phosphonic anhydrides of the formula (III) ~~obtainable obtained by the process of claim 1 a process as claimed in at least one of claims 1 to 7 for condensation reactions, acylations and the preparation of~~ heterocycles.